



LARAMIE REGION ANGLER UPDATE

"Conserving Wildlife—Serving People"

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Special points of interest:

- Summary of last year's activities
- What waters are to be surveyed this year
- Where do those fish come from?
- Why minnows are important to you!
- Look out for toads!
- What waters does the Laramie Crew cover?
- Habitat - why is it so important?

Laramie Angler Newsletter Makes Debut

Welcome to the introductory edition of the annual Laramie Region Angler Update! I hope you find this newsletter interesting, as well as informative in keeping you aware of what is happening around the Laramie Region.

Our region covers over 12,000 square miles and runs from the Colorado border north along the Continental Divide, to the southern end of Seminoe Reservoir; east to the Nebraska border; and south to Colorado.

We manage a variety of fish in this area, from cool and warm water fisheries (walleye, bass, catfish) out on the eastern plains, to high mountain plateau trout lakes surrounding Laramie, from the lakes and streams in the Snowy Range mountains to the **Blue Ribbon** trout rivers like the North Platte. If you want to fish for a particular fish, we probably have it here!

In this introductory newsletter, we'll look at: 1) a summary of what we found last year in our surveys, 2) what our plans are for this season, 3) talk about how hatcheries work, 4) dis-

cuss Wyoming's "other" fish, and 5) learn about some of Wyoming's other water-loving creatures.

We are always interested in what you have to say about Wyoming fishing - whether it's an access comment, a question about what fish is in what water, or any feedback or input you may have. You



Grayrocks Walleye

can contact our office by phone (307-745-4046), fax (307-745-8720) or email: scott.covington@wgf.state.wy.us.

Where Would Management Be Without Culture?

The first fish managers started out by stocking fish. It's only been in the last 40 years or so that image has changed. Now, management is responsible for conserving fisheries by collecting information which is used to make decisions on what waters should be stocked, if regulations need to be changed, or to respond to changing water conditions like drought.

Fish culture is now specialized, focusing on raising (culturing) fish. In Wyoming, there are 11 facilities that provide fish for stocking. Crews do everything from collecting eggs in the wild to raising catchable-size fish. Fish

managers and culturists work together to bring Wyoming anglers a variety of fishing opportunities.

Fish Management and Fish Culture sections work together to maintain *your* fisheries. If it weren't for fish culture, there would be no fisheries on the vast majority of our lakes and reservoirs in the Laramie Region. Streams and rivers however, are for the most part managed as "wild" (not stocked) fisheries and need to be sampled to see they are doing well. Thanks to efforts in *both* sections, we can look forward to many good years of fishing.

Where Do Those Fish Come From?

Wyoming is well known for trout. To see that our lakes and reservoirs have the trout they need, we have developed an extensive hatchery system to supply those fish. There are 11 state fish hatcheries and rearing stations in Wyoming. Along with these facilities the Fish Culture Section also uses special work units that spawn wild fish and distribute fish throughout the state. All units of the Culture Section operate on a statewide basis.

Providing high quality fish for stocking requires several facilities and numerous steps. Fish Management personnel make decisions and recommendations on the number, size, species and stocking date for each water that receives hatchery fish.

Various wild and domestic brood stocks are maintained by the Culture Section to provide high quality disease-free eggs for fish production and native species restoration. Wild or feral brood stocks (Soda Lake near Pinedale is the site for brook and brown trout spawning in Wyoming) utilize lakes, reservoirs and streams to provide populations of fish that are captured and spawned to supply eggs for the hatchery system. A domestic brood stock is maintained at a hatchery and managed to optimize genetic diversity and provide a consistent egg supply.

After spawning, the fragile eggs are shipped to an incubation facility. In the incubator the eggs continue development until they reach the *eyed egg* stage.

Eyed eggs are fairly hardy and can be sorted and shipped from the incubation facility to the hatchery that will hatch the eggs and begin raising fish. When trout eggs hatch they are

called *sac fry* because they still have a yolk sac attached. The yolk provides the nutrition for the fry to complete its development. The small fish, now called a *swim-up fry*, are trained to eat an



Stocking fingerling rainbow trout

artificial diet and rearing to the proper size begins. Small fish are frequently transferred to a rearing station so that they can finish growing to the right size for stocking. Four or more different facilities may be directly involved in raising any one group of fish before stocking.

Warm and cool water species like bass and walleye are obtained in trade with other states and the federal hatchery system. We trade Wyoming's high quality disease free eggs for fish like bass and walleye.

Fishermen frequently see hatchery trucks stocking fish in Southeast Wyoming. The size of the units range from 1-ton 4x4 trucks with 300-gallon tanks to tandem axle trucks with 2 - 1,400 gallon tanks.

You can visit any of Wyoming's fish hatcheries. In southeast Wyoming the Como Bluff Fish Hatchery is located 16 miles northeast of Rock River Wyoming off Highway 30. Como Bluff Hatchery is open daily from 8 am to 5pm.

Lee McDonald
Como Bluff Superintendent

2003 Laramie Region Stocking Numbers

Brood Culls	10,134
Catchable Trout	141,284
Fingerling Trout	719,952
Walleye	586,680
Totals	1,458,050

What Fish Goes Where?

Stocking hatchery-reared fish is an important management tool in the Laramie Region. These fish are used in several important ways depending on the needs of the fishing public and of specific fisheries.

Catchable size fish average 8.5 inches, with rainbow trout being the most common. Stocking starts in early spring and continues through autumn. Fisheries maintained with catchable fish include Huck Finn Pond in Laramie, Country Club Lake in Cheyenne, and Crystal and Granite reservoirs. These waters have limited or no spawning habitat, have seasonal habitat changes and are fished by many anglers, which prevent them from being stocked with fingerling

(smaller) fish.

Fingerling and sub-catchable size fish (3 to 7 inches) are the most frequently stocked size of fish in southeast Wyoming. They are used where natural reproduction is limited, but habitat and productivity allow fish to grow quickly and survive to be available to anglers in the future.



Stocking the Gap Lakes in the Snowies using people power and backpacks.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Rainbow trout, Bear River cutthroat, kokanee salmon, brown trout and other special species are stocked to provide future fishing. Examples of where fingerling fish are stocked include Lake Hattie, East Allen Reservoir and Wheatland Reservoir # 3.

Special fish stocking also provides unique opportunities for fishermen. High mountain lakes are stocked by helicopter or backpack to provide fishing in lakes that are not accessible by vehicle. Brook trout are stocked in beaver ponds to establish and maintain fishing in constantly changing situations. Unique

species, like grayling, are stocked for diversity of fishing.

Hatchery-reared fish are also used to restore damaged fisheries, those affected by drought, floods, or habitat degradation. Hatchery-reared native species are frequently used as part of programs to restore populations to native ranges and protect these species for the future.

Wyoming's "Other" Fish Christina Barrineau Prairie Streams Biologist

Have you ever wondered about those "other" fish you see swimming around while you're fishing? The "other" fish are mainly nongame types -- not a kind that you think about while "baitin' the hook," but interesting when you learn a little about them.

There are about 800 freshwater fish species native (born here) to the US, **but only 5%** of them are considered sport fishes (trout, bass, etc.). The **other 95%** are nongame fishes, such as darters, minnows, and suckers. Wyoming only has **about 40** native-nongame fish species; quite a few less than the numbers of fishes compared to the eastern or southwestern regions of the US! Most of them live in streams and rivers that change so much that game fish cannot live in them. For example, many prairie streams in eastern Wyoming are too warm or too murky for trout while some nongame species, such as mountain sucker and mottled sculpin, often live in trout streams. Several can only be found in one stream within our state, such as the pearl dace (Niobrara River) and the orangethroat darter (Lodgepole Creek).

"There are about 800 freshwater fish species native to the US, but only 5% of these species are considered sport fishes (trout, bass, etc.)."

So why are nongame fish important and why should you care about them?

Answer #1: Nongame fish are part of Wyoming's history. Before many game fish were brought to Wyoming, most waters had nongame fish in them. Having nongame fish in our waters increases the variety that can be found throughout Wyoming from the Green River to the Powder River. How boring it would be to have the same fish in every water!

Answer #2: Nongame fish are excellent indicators of how healthy a water is. If all of a sudden you notice dead fish in your local stream, it is a good sign that something is wrong with the water. Remember, its not just nongame and game fish that depend on water. Other wildlife, livestock, and humans need water too! When you see fish in a stream, you know it's probably healthy because it can support life.



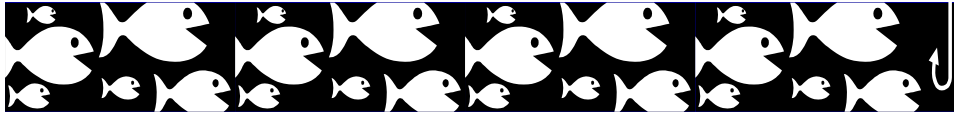
Plains killifish from Horse Creek, Goshen County.

Answer #3: You may not want to eat that little common shiner, but some other animal just might. Nongame fish provide food to other fish, birds, reptiles, and mammals. It is important to maintain the food supply to all wildlife, so that other members can survive.

And finally, Answer #4: Don't they deserve to live too? Our native-nongame fish were here before the settlement of Wyoming. Just because most of these fish are not eaten by people, does not mean they are not important! They are part of the natural fish community.

Nongame fish serve an important role in our waters. I doubt you'll ever see an angler fishing for a darter, but the next time you are out fishing, take a few minutes and see if can spot some of Wyoming's "other" fish swimming around out there!

A page just for kids...



Something is
fishy!

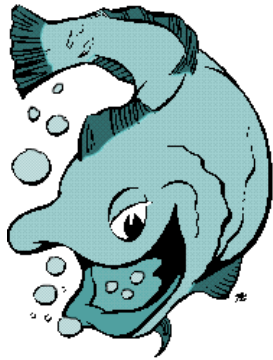


Do you know how fish

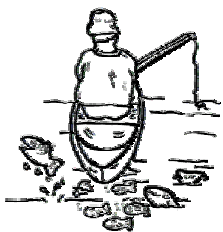
SWIM? Fish swim by flexing their bodies and tails. The tail is called the caudal (caw-dull) fin. As fish flex their bodies and tails, it moves them forward. They move their other fins, or tails, to change directions or move backward.



EAT? Fish eat other creatures in the water, such as insects and other fish of all sizes. Fish swallow their food whole, and so they don't have any teeth for chewing.

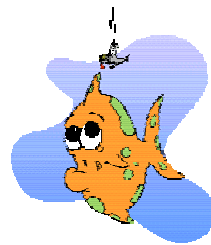
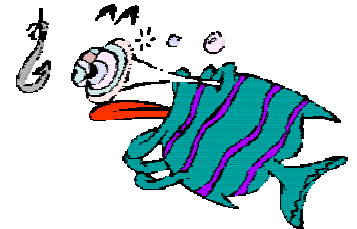


BREATHE? Fish don't have lungs, like people do, but they still need to breathe oxygen to stay alive. Fish get oxygen by filtering water through their gills, which serve the same purpose as lungs.



SEE? Like some animals fish have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can see in front of them on either side. They see best at close range in clear water, and can see things that aren't in the water! They can't see well behind them.

TASTE? Fish taste their food with taste buds that are on their tongues and also on the outside of their bodies. When a fish takes something into its mouth, but doesn't like the taste it will spit it out.



SMELL? A fish's nose is two small openings on the head. The sense of smell is very important to fish because it helps them find their food and warns them of danger.

HEAR? The line that runs down the sides of a fish, called the lateral line, enables it to detect sound waves or vibrations in the water. The fish learns that its enemies make certain sounds in the water, and its food also makes telltale sounds.

Valuing Amphibians

Bill Turner
Herpetological Coordinator



Boreal Toad

more exotic creatures. All amphibians in Wyoming have a two-part life cycle. They hatch from eggs in water and continue to grow there as larva. After a period of time, they metamorphose (change) and become adults that live on land or in water. All Wyoming species return to the water to breed, where the cycle begins again.

Scientists all over the world are concerned over amphibian declines. *Should you be worried?* Read on and you may find out why you should start **valuing amphibians**.

Amphibians include frogs, toads and salamanders as well as some

of meat.

Amphibians are directly helpful to humans. Thanks to frogs, we have learned much through experiments in developmental biology, genetics, pharmaceuticals, toxicology, cellular biology, anatomy and physiology. The African Clawed Frog has been used for many scientific discoveries, including the modern pregnancy test. Leopard Frogs have given many future Doctors their first experience in anatomy during dissections in high school.

Amphibians produce unique chemicals. Some of these are for defense. The Marine Toad has a very bad toxin that is powerful enough to kill house cats. This chemical also has unique antibacterial and antifungal properties. There is hope of using it as an antibiotic to replace currently ineffective ones. Other amphibians produce chemicals that may be used in chemotherapy and the treatment of heart attacks. While more of these chemicals are being found all the time, if we allow amphibians to become extinct we may be robbed of their use.

Finally, because these animals are becoming endangered and are the focus of conservation efforts, land is being set aside for them. This land provides habitat for fish and game. By conserving amphibians, we preserve our fishing and hunting lands for future generations.

I hope you will remember these facts when thinking about amphibians. Without amphibians, our future may not be as bright. In a world without frogs and toads, children would miss seeing tadpoles turn into frogs, what would princesses kiss and what would we blame for warts?



Wood Frog

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

BETWEEN A TOAD AND A FROG? Toads have large poison glands called "*paratoids*," which are two large glands behind their eyes and they have bumpy, warty skin, while frogs do not have any of these features.

DID YOU KNOW???

- ♦ **Boreal toads** do not usually call to attract mates like other toads do?
- ♦ **Tiger Salamander** larvae are also called *mudpuppies* or *waterdogs*.
- ♦ The **Wyoming Toad** is one of the most endangered amphibians in North America.

Another trait of amphibians is their *ectothermy*. This term means that they are the same temperature as their surroundings. Not making body heat allows them to be energy efficient. For example, cattle convert less than 2% of their food into muscle. Amphibians, like toads, convert up to 50%. If toads were as big and tasty as cows, we could graze them and get 25 times the meat! Of course, instead of grass the toads would eat insects, which is another benefit. Insects can damage crops and transmit disease although it isn't as likely when they are in a toad's belly.

Amphibians are important because of their ectothermy. Tadpoles eat algae. Trout can't eat algae, but they can eat tadpoles. The tadpoles convert algae into tadpole meat efficiently. Adult amphibians are capable of the same thing. They convert bugs into frog, toad or salamander meat. Amphibians support much larger animals per pound

Eastern Plains and Laramie Range

EASTERN PLAINS

Grayrocks Reservoir Over 100 walleye were collected in our September samples. Nearly 80 percent of the walleye caught exceeded 15 inches and 23 percent were over 20 inches. In addition to walleye, lots of channel catfish were caught. All



Grayrocks walleye

catfish were over 11 inches and 37 percent exceeded 16 inches. Drum could also be found in our catch, along with smallmouth bass. Water levels continue to drop, but the main boat ramp is still usable. This reservoir is netted annually in late summer. During June, we will

be at Grayrocks asking anglers what they're catching as well as taking samples to look at how many fish are reproducing in the reservoir.

Hawk Springs Reservoir It was drawn down so low during late summer that we nearly decided to eliminate sampling altogether for fear of causing damage to the walleye—beyond what the stresses of low water might cause. We did not set our standard nets, but did set small mesh gill nets, and small mesh trap nets to sample the shoreline for small walleye. We will continue evaluating the contribution of stocked fish. This reservoir is usually netted annually in late summer, but if water levels do not improve, netting may be delayed another year.

Festo Lake This lake continues to produce trophy fish – not bad considering it is only 40 acres. Last April, two lucky anglers each caught a 43-inch and 44-inch tiger musky. Besides tiger musky, the lake is stocked every other year with catfish. The next sampling is scheduled for 2005.

Packers Lake In July of 2002, our nets caught largemouth bass up to 17 inches, walleye up to 18 inches, as well as many 10-inch black crappie and 14-16 inch catfish. The lake is due to be sampled next in 2005.

LARAMIE RANGE

Granite Reservoir While netting Granite last fall, we found several unexpected fish in our nets. Catch included 17 rainbow trout and 35 yellow perch, a brown trout over 27 inches long and over 11 pounds along with a 16-inch Yellowstone cutthroat, and unfortunately a 16-inch walleye. A creel survey was

conducted at Granite and Crystal this past year. Initial results indicated fishing was good!

Crystal Reservoir Crystal reservoir was gill netted in October. Catch of rainbow trout was a little faster than in Granite. Forty-two rainbow trout were caught along with 3 brown trout and 8 yellow perch. While net action was faster on Crystal, a few bigger fish were caught in Granite.

East Kennedy Reservoir Located on the WGFD's Kennedy Wildlife Management Area, the lake was netted in June to assess over winter survival of stocked fish. Rainbow trout are doing well. Fish up to 15 inches (1.3 lbs) were caught. Not bad for a small 3-acre pond.

Pole Mountain Beaver Ponds

The first Saturday in June is typically when folks from 9 to 90 come out to help the Department stock brook trout in the Pole Mountains, just east of Laramie. This past June 7, volunteers stocked approximately 15,000 brook trout in beaver ponds throughout the Pole Mountain area. This annual event is scheduled for June 5, 2004. If you are interested in helping with this event, please contact our office.

WHAT'S A CREEL SURVEY?

Have you ever been asked by a Game and Fish biologist, "how's the fishing?" That's the basics of a creel survey. This survey is designed to gather information on how the fishing is. Anglers are asked specific questions like "*how long have you been fishing today*" or "*how many fish have you caught today?*" These surveys help biologists figure out how the fishery is doing from an angler's perspective.



UN-

Grayrocks channel catfish

DISCOVERED FISHING HOLES???

Have you made any trips up to Laramie Peak lately? If you're heading north out of Laramie to Esterbrook on the Esterbrook Road, you may be passing by a fishing hole and not even know it. Recently, **Bear Creek** was signed up for Walk in Access. While you probably won't catch any monsters here, there are many brook trout waiting to take you on.

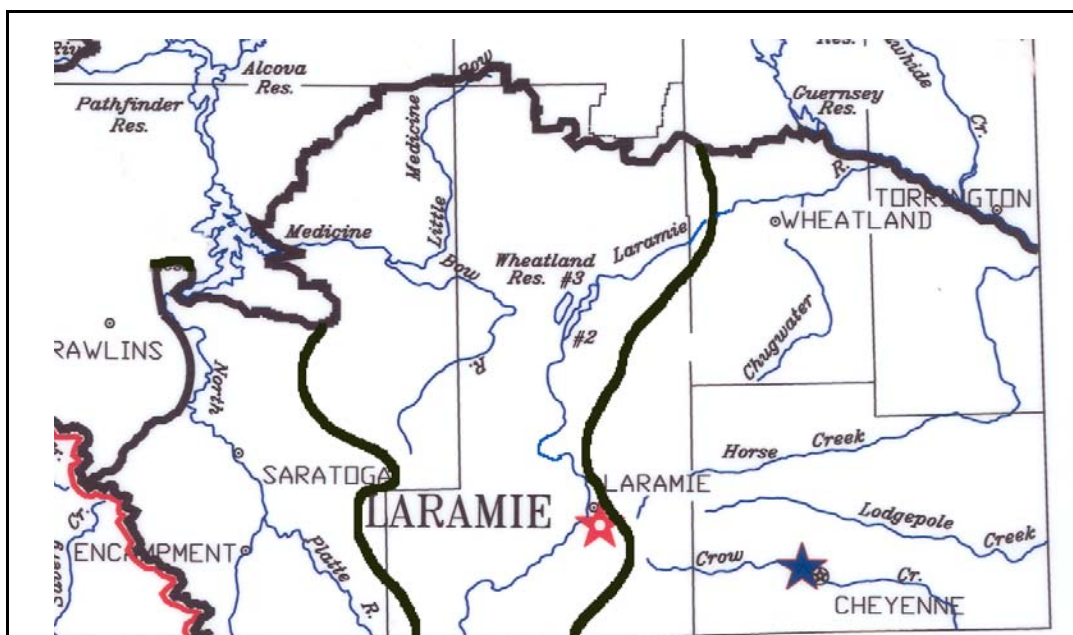
On your way between Crystal and Granite reservoirs, you may have noticed signs along the road for Walk in Access. This stretch of the **South Fork of Middle Crow Creek** has been signed up, so it is open for fishing. And fishing is good! Last year, anglers reported catching many brook, brown, and rainbow trout in this small stream.

For more information on our Walk-In-Access areas, stop by a Game and Fish office and pick up a free copy of the latest **Walk-In-Access Fishing** book.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO FISH FOR...

Grayling were first stocked in North Crow Reservoir (Pole Mountains between Laramie and Cheyenne) in 2002. Since then, reports are coming in that anglers are catching 10 to 12 inch Grayling. We hope to establish a wild, naturally reproducing population in the near future, by stocking these fish for several years. Grayling can swim up North Crow Creek to spawn, where there is lots of spawning gravel available. These fish are amazing fighters, often leaping out of the water when hooked. Check out North Crow the next time you're passing through on Happy Jack Road.



Map of the Laramie Region indicating the 3 different management areas: Eastern Plains to the Laramie Range Mountains; Laramie Plains to the Snowy Range Mountains; Platte Valley to the Sierra Madre Mountains.

The Laramie Region: East to West

The Eastern plains are known for warmwater fishing opportunities. Graylocks Reservoir, the largest water body here, has abundant walleye, catfish, smallmouth bass plus freshwater drum and black crappie. Rock Lake and Wheatland Reservoir #1 have catfish and walleye. Festo has catfish and the only tiger muskies in the region. While there is little water in the Laramie Range, brook trout fishing can be good in the small forest streams.

The Laramie Plains lakes have a well-deserved reputation for growing nice trout. Most lakes have excellent rainbow trout

fishing, while there are Bear River Cutthroats in Wheatland Reservoir #3 and East Allen. The Snowy Range Mountains have many streams with brook trout as well as really good brook, cutthroat and rainbow trout lakes.

The Platte Valley has one of the best-fishing waters in the country: The North Platte River. In addition to river fishing, Saratoga Lake just north of Saratoga has a healthy population of rainbow trout. The Sierra Madres are known for good fishing, especially along the Encampment River.

WHAT IS WINTERKILL?

Winterkill occurs because there is not enough oxygen in the water; fish suffocate. This isn't usually a problem, because wind action mixes oxygen in the air with the water. When ice forms on a lake, you lose the ability to exchange air with water. As long as plants can get sunlight, however, they can continue to use photosynthesis to make food and oxygen (which is a useful "byproduct"). If snow covers the ice, plants can't get sunlight and they die. When they die, they rot. As plants rot and oxygen is used in the chemical process, it sucks oxygen out of the water. If enough oxygen is removed, then fish begin to die. This is the process we call winterkill.



Twin Buttes Rainbow Trout.

Laramie Plains and Snowy Range

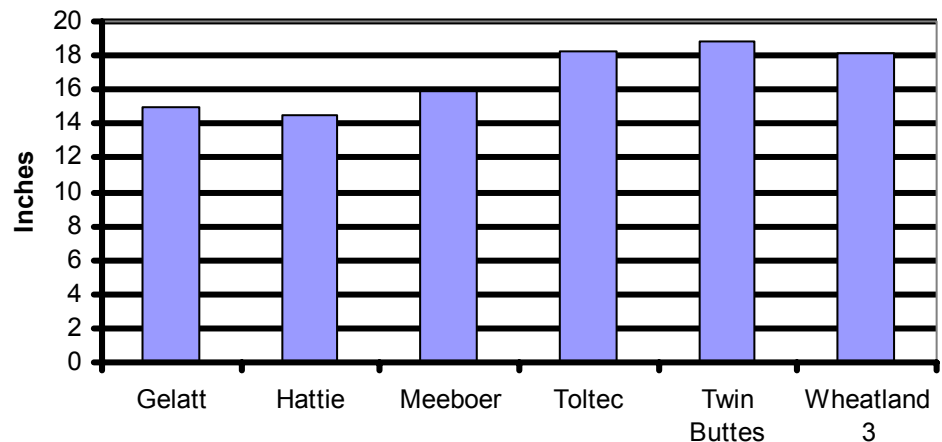
LARAMIE PLAINS LAKES

Gelatt Lake The oxygen injection system prevented winterkill for another year. Spring netting revealed a healthy population of rainbow trout. Forty-two were captured with fish averaging 15.0 inches, with sizes ranging from 12.3-21.0 inches. Average weight was 1.4 lb with a range from 0.7-3.4 pounds. Grass carp are still doing their job, removing vegetation, with many large open patches. Removal of vegetation helps reduce the risk of winterkill. Spring netting is scheduled for April.

inches and 1.9 pounds. Sizes ranged from 13.5-26.4 inches and weights ranging from 0.9-8.7 pounds. An exceptionally large rainbow measured over 26 inches and weighed almost 9 pounds. Spring netting is scheduled for April.

Toltec Reservoir Netting this past April verified winter survival of rainbow trout. Of those captured, average length was 18.3 inches with sizes ranging from 17.7-19.0 in. Average weight was 2.3lbs, and ranged from 2.1-2.7 lbs. This water will be netted again in 2005.

Average Length of Plains Lakes Rainbow Trout



Average length of plains lakes rainbow trout captured in gillnets during 2003.

Lake Hattie The lake was netted in May. Rainbow trout average 14.5 inches, with the largest coming in at 18.9 inches (2.3 lbs). Kokanee continue to do well, with many fish up to 17 inches. Several large brown trout were caught, with 1 fish 24.7 inches (6.1 lbs). Last fall, the lake had declined to 1900 surface acres representing 63% of the total surface acreage at full pool, making it difficult to launch boats. Spring netting is scheduled for May.

Meeboer Lake Spring netting indicated trout were in excellent condition. The catch was 101 rainbow trout averaging 15.9

Twin Buttes Reservoir April netting results indicated trout were in good condition. Rainbows did very well, with the largest average size for plains lakes trout caught in our nets (18.8 inches; 2.3 pounds). The largest rainbow caught was an individual reaching 21.5 inches and 3.5 pounds. More yellow perch were captured (46 total) than in previous surveys, with several in the 10-11 inch range. Spring netting is scheduled for April.

Wheatland Reservoir #3 Wheatland Reservoir #3 was netted in September. Rainbow

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(Continued from page 8)

trout and Bear River cutthroat trout were in excellent condition with average size of rainbow trout 18.1 inches (range 10.7-21.7 inches) and 3.1 lbs (range from 0.6-4.5 lbs), while cutthroats averaged 18.6 inches (range of 13.9-21.0 inches) and 3.1 lbs (range of 1.9-4.1 lbs). With the very low water levels, monthly checks of dissolved oxygen started in January. Open water in both the north and south sections have helped

to keep oxygen levels high, reducing the potential for winter-kill. We will continue monthly dissolved oxygen checks throughout this winter. If oxygen levels drop, the lake will be netted this spring to check for over-winter survival, otherwise, it will be netted again in 2005.

SNOWY RANGE SURVEYS

Nash Fork Creek The creek was sampled at the Green Rock picnic area in the Medicine Bow National Forest. There were many brook trout, with an average size of 7.6 inches. Brown trout averaged 8.7 inches, however, one large male measured 15.6 inches. This section is managed as a "wild trout" stream (not stocked) and will be sampled again in 2008.

Lewis Lake The last year Lewis Lake was sampled was 1999. At that time, the largest splake was 14 inches. When sampled this past July, there are now some greater than 18 inches and the average size of splake is 12.2 inches.

Libby Lake The lake was netted in July. Many brook trout were found, with some over 14 inches - very respectable for a high mountain lake next to a major access road. Both average length and maximum length were greater than the last sam-



Pulling trapnet on Lake Hattie



Pulling the airstone bubbler for the oxygen system on Meeboer Lake.

pling in 1987. Splake continue to increase in size as well. In 1987, splake had a maximum length of 10.2 inches with some individuals now reaching 20 inches.

Phantom Lake Twenty-five brook trout were collected in July. Their average length was 9.7 inches (up to 11.7 inches), with an average weight of 0.4 pounds. The naturally reproducing brook trout population appears in excellent shape.

Sand Lake The dam was repaired this past spring and rainbow trout are being stocked again. Splake have continued to be stocked and of those netted this past summer, average length was 9.4 inches (up to 12.8 inches) and average weight was 0.3 lbs. This water will be netted again in 2005.

OTHER SURVEYS FOR THIS YEAR

Rob Roy and Lake Owen You may be seeing Game and Fish a lot this summer at these lakes. There is a creel survey running from July through September.

Douglas Creek Below Rob Roy Reservoir, a stream survey is planned for Douglas Creek to evaluate this wild trout fishery.

Porter Creek and Elkhorn Creek After several years of stocking brook trout, we will evaluate how they're doing.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT WINTERKILL?

Most people assume we directly add oxygen to water through an air hose, much like you would aerate an aquarium. Actually, rising bubbles from an aerator create a movement of water from the bottom of the lake upwards, which keeps a small area ice-free. When the water reaches the surface, it picks up oxygen from the atmosphere. The oxygenated water is then dispersed under the ice by currents. Also, if a large enough hole is created in the ice, sun and wind action will open up a portion of the lake. Anglers should use caution when icefishing, as the currents created cause unstable ice conditions around the holes. We run oxygen systems on Meeboer and Gelatt lakes all winter.

ELECTROFISHING is the use of electricity to capture fish. It is used to efficiently gather fish so they can be measured, weighed and released without harm.



WHAT IS A SPLAKE?

A splake is a cross between a female brook trout and a male lake trout. They often have features from both parents, but sometimes favor one over the other - so it can be difficult to tell them apart. Most look like a brook trout with a slightly forked tail. We commonly stock them in waters with lots of small, stunted brook trout or white suckers, so they can eat the small fish; splake can grow quite large.

Platte Valley and Sierra Madres

Good Reservoir 2 Alive and doing *very* well describes this remote brook trout lake. In our samples, brook trout averaged 11.2 inches, but we caught a 15.3-inch fish, while losing one that was well over 18 inches. There is a lot of food for trout in this small lake, so fishing can be slow.

Saratoga Lake The lake was netted twice last year and all trout captured appeared in excellent condition. We caught over 2 trout per hour in our nets, with one big brown that was just short of 23 inches. Rainbow size was up to almost 22 inches. Invasion of brook stickleback was seen in our trapnets, but trout are eating some of the small spiny fish. Walleye have also made their way into the lake again. Four were caught last fall, from 15.6 to 19.8 inches. The lake will be netted again in 2005 to monitor these populations.

estimates were similar to the 2000 North Platte River survey (<1% kept).

North Platte River The river was electrofished last August from Pick Bridge to the old gravel pit (4.72 miles). The drought seems to be influencing the number of fish caught, as numbers have declined compared to previous surveys. The amount of water can be linked with the number of trout. Basically, less habitat equals fewer fish. As the water recedes, holes that once were, are now dry and on the shore. As the drought lessens, trout numbers will increase as available habitat increases.



Good Reservoir 2 — brook trout

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Encampment River Stream surveys are planned for the Encampment River this fall, along with 12 streams on the eastern side of the river. In addition to this sampling, we will be running another "remote creel card" survey. Creel boxes will be located at the Commisary Park trailhead, the BLM Oddfellows campground, and the Baggot Rocks State section. Please fill out a card if you fish these sections.

North Platte River Electrofishing surveys are planned for Treasure Isle and upstream of Douglas Creek on the North Platte to monitor populations in these sections of the river.

Encampment River We sampled 12 streams along the west side of the Encampment River this past summer for comparison with the past surveys. Average fish sizes were similar however numbers of fish were generally much higher in the recent surveys. Most of these small streams contain only brook trout, with the exception of the South Fork of Miner Creek, which has a small population of Colorado River cutthroat trout. Of special note is South Fork Hog Park Creek, where anglers may find brown trout over 12 inches.

Encampment River Remote Creel Creel card boxes were set up in June at three locations along the Encampment River: 1) Oddfellows Park at the BLM campground, 2) Purgatory Gulch, and 3) Commisary Park. Those anglers that filled out the cards indicated the catch rate (fish per hour) was very high. Overall catch rates were two times as high (2.72 fish per hour versus 1.36) as estimates made in 2000 on the North Platte River (state line south to the Saratoga Inn Bridge). Average number of fish caught per angler was 12.6. Fishing was generally pretty good, with 14 anglers reporting catches of 20 fish or more per day. While people were catching lots of fish, they weren't keeping them. Of 603 fish caught, only 21 were kept (3.5%). These



Working up fish on the North Platte River

Aquatic Habitat Section Update

During the past decade, habitat components within the Wyoming Game and Fish Department have undergone some big changes in organization. Why? Habitat issues may be the single greatest challenge facing the Department in the coming years.

Perhaps the greatest structural change has been the staffing of an aquatic habitat biologist and a terrestrial habitat biologist in each regional office and cooperation with Natural Resource Conservation Districts in Wheatland, Greybull and Newcastle to staff Habitat Extension Biologists.



Encampment River—Billie Creek Watershed

These positions reflect the increased emphasis on habitat – in addition to our continuing emphasis on animal populations – as does the Department’s STRATEGIC HABITAT PLAN.

The Strategic Habitat Plan is built on the concept of doing habitat work from a landscape, or watershed, approach. The Plan has three goals: 1) Manage, preserve and restore habitat for long-term management of wildlife populations; 2) Increase wildlife based recreation through habitat enhancements that increase productivity of wildlife, and 3) Increase or maintain wildlife habitat and associated recreation on the Department’s Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.

Goal 1 1) work on watershed-scale habitat projects, 2) seize opportunities to preserve important habitats through conservation easements, agreements, or acquisitions, 3) build stronger partnerships with private parties, federal agencies, and other organizations, and 4) complete watershed-scale habitat projects,



North Laramie River

and also improve our own commitment and integration of the Strategic Habitat Plan throughout the Department. Our Habitat Extension Biologists are important in developing and maintaining habitat projects on private lands and streams.

Goal 2 is also dependent on the work of our Habitat Extension Biologists, as well as the Aquatic and Terrestrial habitat biologists. While we work towards watershed-scale accomplishments, much can be accomplished for wildlife habitats at smaller, project-scale efforts. Strong partnerships are key. Watershed-scale projects can be challenging when many private land owners are involved. Success may best be gained working at smaller scales with a small number of land owners. We encourage any land owner interested in enhancing private land terrestrial or aquatic habitat to contact the nearest Habitat Biologist in our Regional Offices or the nearest Habitat Extension Biologist. To help us reach goal 2, we need private land owners to talk to us about their ideas for habitat enhancement opportunities.

Goal 3 stresses active management of our Wildlife Habitat Management Areas to meet habitat and recreation objectives. We also recognize a need to effectively communicate those objectives to the public.

This plan will require an effort unlike those of previous efforts - requiring a new way of approaching habitat, based on the land itself and the needs of all the wildlife and people who depend on it. It will require teamwork and a broader view of our responsibilities. Most of all, it will require a change in the way we think of habitat and habitat conservation. But as Albert Einstein once said, “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” This plan requires a new level of thinking. It is a bold step into the future.

“This plan will require an effort unlike those of previous efforts - requiring a new way of approaching habitat, based on the land itself and the needs of all the wildlife and people who depend on it.”

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Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[HTTP://GF.STATE.WY.US/](http://GF.STATE.WY.US/)

"Conserving Wildlife — Serving People"



The Laramie Crew

The Laramie Region Fisheries Management Crew is composed of three full-time biologists: Mike Snigg, Regional Fisheries Supervisor; and Matt Hahn and Scott Covington, Regional Fisheries Biologists.

Mike has been on the Laramie Fish Management Crew since 1986. He was promoted in August of 2003 from regional fisheries biologist to regional fisheries supervisor. Mike has over 28 years with the Department. After obtaining his Bachelor's from Simpson College in Iowa, he worked for the Department for several years, and received his Master's from UW.

Matt was hired as a regional fisheries biologist in August 2003. Matt received his Bachelor's in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology from the University of Wyoming in 2000 and his Master's in Fish Ecology from University of North Dakota in 2002.

Scott started with Game and Fish working out of Kemmerer, then moved to Vermont where he was a District Fisheries Biologist with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. Two years ago, he came back to Wyoming as a biologist work-

FISH DIVISION MISSION STATEMENT

"As stewards on Wyoming's aquatic resources, we are committed to conservation and enhancement of all aquatic wildlife and their habitats for future generations through scientific resource management and informed public participation. We will use an integrated program of protection, regulation, propagation, restoration and control to provide diverse, quality fisheries resources and angling opportunities. Our efforts will balance the productive capacity of habitats with public desires."

Many thanks to Newsletter Contributors: Christina Barineau, Matt Hahn, Lee McDonald, Curt Meyer, Janet Milek, Chrystal Sholl, Mike Snigg, and Bill Turner and Michelle Zitek.



From left to right: Mike Snigg, Matt Hahn, Scott Covington

ing out of the Laramie office. He received his Bachelor's from the University of Arkansas and a Master's from the University of Wyoming.